

FIRST WALKING, THEN RUNNING TOWARDS THE NEXT LEVEL OF LEADERSHIP



The best leaders are thinkers and doers. They know how to plan strategically and then put those plans into action through their own initiatives and the efforts of others. But not all successful leaders start out as effective strategic thinkers and planners. Like other aspects of leadership, strategic thinking and planning are skills that can be acquired and refined through study and practice.

Such was the situation with a recent coachee who was in line for a promotion to a significant leadership position. Although she was arguably well-qualified to lead at a high level, her progress was impeded by a lack of confidence and a tendency to think more short-term as opposed to thinking and strategizing with a medium and long-term horizon. Helping clients advance along their career trajectory is our specialty, and we were enthused about working with this client to make that happen.

THE SITUATION



Cheryl (not her real name) was an up-and-coming leader at a large financial services company. After proving her competence in a relatively short time at the middle manager level, Cheryl was being fast-tracked by executive management for a larger role as a senior leader with a regional focus.

Although Cheryl possessed strong industry knowledge coupled with an impressive array of leadership attributes including empathy, superior client relations and staff development, executive management still felt she was not quite ready for the multiple challenges and responsibilities of leading at the next level. Therefore, the company decided to invest in executive coaching. They believed a solid match with a suitable executive coach would best prepare Cheryl for the move up.

THE SITUATION

Specifically, it was felt that Cheryl needed to acquire a level of strategic perspective and input that went beyond the day-to-day routine she was accustomed to. Moreover, to make time for participating at the leadership team level, she would need to up her organizational and prioritizing skills to avoid the “I’m overwhelmed” feelings that can lead to job burnout.

She would also need to further develop and refine the communication skills and confidence required of a person overseeing a large and diverse group of direct and indirect reports. For example, holding people accountable and asserting when necessary were going to be called for more often than Cheryl was used to in her prior roles.

It was to be seen if working with an experienced and credentialed executive coach would prove to be the catalyst for advancing her leadership skills for success at a higher level.



THE COACHING

Our initial 6-month engagement with Cheryl consisted of weekly coaching sessions, all conducted remotely via Zoom. Our agenda was to address issues that would help Cheryl think and act more strategically, become more assertive, act with confidence when taking on more administrative duties, and feel in command of an increased workload and packed schedules.

We started the coaching by in-taking information about Cheryl: her skill set and management style, and the new responsibilities she'd be assuming. A 360 survey yielded a good amount of useful feedback that shaped the coaching moving forward.

The first specific areas we tackled together were organization and follow-through. These skills would form the foundation for thinking and acting more strategically. Also incorporated were strategies for prioritizing tasks and delegating tasks to others.



THE COACHING

Subsequent areas we coached Cheryl on included aspects of executive presence. Cheryl's advancement in all these areas enabled her to evolve into the kind of effective leader that upper management always believed she could be.

The 6-month coaching engagement flew by quickly, and Cheryl was showing clear progress. Because of the success to date, senior management wanted to build upon the successful relationship formed between Cheryl and her coach and chose to extend the engagement. Cheryl and her coach were more than happy to continue since they'd not only bonded but knew they could get even more accomplished with additional time.

During the next phase, we guided Cheryl to further refine her strategic orientation and focus. We also gathered another round of feedback to ensure the coaching work was on track and others besides senior management were seeing the growth and development. Having put in place numerous new methods to better manage her packed schedule, she was able to contribute solidly to upper level conversations about the future of the office and region. Other leaders were starting to take notice and appreciate the contributions she was making towards solving larger problems and growing the top line.

THE OUTCOME

More than anything, we witnessed Cheryl's growth of confidence. Prior to the coaching, she wasn't fully sure of her abilities and suitability for a senior leadership role. In essence she was gingerly walking towards the promotion.

However, as the result of working with a coach, she became confident and felt primed to accept the challenges of the higher position. Building off the earlier picture, now Cheryl was striding and even running towards the next level and sometimes working as a peer to her leader. This was a big change.



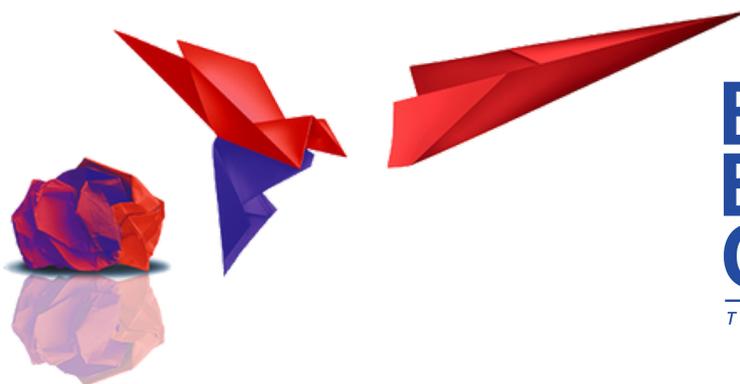
Cheryl's advancement in all the areas she was coached in: confidence, strategic planning, communication, decision making, and executive presence set her up to become the effective senior leader that executive management always believed she could be.

During check-in meetings with Cheryl's management, the feedback we received about Cheryl was very positive and supportive. It indicated that Cheryl was indeed ready to successfully take the next step in her career. While it wasn't the moment of promotion just yet, the stage had been set and we ended the engagement feeling the objectives had been met. Cheryl had arrived.

THE SOLUTION

As executive coaches, our job is to empower clients to find and apply their own solutions to career challenges. The role we play is that of a catalyst enabling positive and focused change that's good for the leader and their organization.

If you have high potential leaders in your organization who can use the accelerated boost that can come from experienced executive coaching, [contact us](#) today to schedule an exploratory meeting.



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